

Avondale Mills Project

Interviewees: Mary and Cliff Bagwell

Interviewer: Eddie Akin

May 5, 1981

A: This is an interview with Mr. and Mrs. Bagwell at their home on Fifth Avenue North in Birmingham, what, May 5, 1981

M: Uh, huh.

A: The month's moving on. Mrs. Bagwell, what-what I like to do to start with is just ask you to tell me something about where you were born and when.

M: Well, I was born in Dale County near Ozark in 1909.

A: And do you remember much or did your folks tell you much where they came from and how they settle there?

M: Uh, well, I know my granddaddy, on my daddy,s side, come from Georgia.

A: Uh, huh.

M: But I don't know what part of Georgia.

A: Yeah. And then they settled there, have they been in Ozark quite a while?

M: They lived in Ozark, out in the country from Ozark.

A: Yeah, yeah.

M: Yeah, they've been there all the time-all the time. I think ever since by granddaddy was small.

A: Yeah. Now which one of the children were you? Uh, first, how many-how many brothers and sisters did you have?

M: I had one sister and two brothers. He is my brother.

A: Oh, this is your brother. Okay.

M: My brother.

A: And uh you, which-which one of the children were you? Were you?

M: I was next to the oldest, the second one. My sister was older than I am.

A: And you come in-are you the youngest?

C: No, I was the third.

M: He's third.

A: Mm, hmm. Now y'all, you were born there in Ozark, did you grow up there?

C: Well, it was actually.

M: Well, we were just all over Dale County.

A: Well, yeah, I mean

M: We grew up mostly in Midland City.

A: Yeah, yeah

M: About twenty miles-twenty-five miles from Ozark I guess.

A: What was your father doing?

M: Farm.

A: Did he own his own or was he cropping?

M: No, he rented.

A: ...rented from someone. And so y'all moved quite a bit when you were growing up?

M: Yeah, quite a bit.

A: Now, how far were you able to get into school?

M: I just got through grammar school.

A: Uh, huh. There, I guess a little one room country school.

M: Midland City.

C: No, it was uh big school.

A: A little larger than that?

C: It was a big school. Consolidated school you know when they consolidated back then.

A: Yeah.

M: See three or four little towns went there to school.

A: Yeah.

C: It was a big school though. Eighteen or twenty...

A: Yeah.

C students went there.

A: Well, that is something different than the lot of the places I ....

C: It started off in a one room school.

M: Oh, it started off in a one room school, but that where I went from then on.

A: Yeah.

M: ...from then on.

A: Yeah. Now, did y'all's folks move here or how did you end up ...

M: No.

A: ...in Birmingham?

M: Uh, my uncle, you know, and I come up here to work

A: Uh, huh.

M: ...and boarded with them.

A: Now, did he work in Avondale?

M: He worked at Avondale Mills

A: Uh, huh. Now how had he gotten here?

M: Well, his brother was here and he come cause his brother was here.

C: Well, uh, he-he worked at Avondale Mills at Eufaula.

M: Yeah, he worked at Avondale Mills at Eufaula too, he followed too, him and his wife followed.

A: Yeah, yeah. Then they had come up here from there.

C: Mm, hmm.

A: Yeah. Now, about how old were you....

M: When I come up?

A: When you came here?

M: I was thirty when I come up here.

A: So you have been in the dark for quite a while before then.

M: Yeah. Mm, hmm. Yeah.

A: Had you been with your folks on the farm up until then?

M: Yeah, but my daddy died when uh well, I think I was nineteen when he died.

A: Yeah. So you helped your mother.

M: Yeah.

A: ...there until....

M: And my brother, over there, he you know. Took care of my mother.

A: Yeah.

M: And then when he had to go into service my Mother came up here to stay with me.

A: Yeah.

M: I've been living in this house for twenty-thirty-eight years.

A: Uh, huh. Now when you went into service was this-how far back was that?

C: I went in in '42.

A: During World War II .

C: December 1942.

A: Yeah. So when he went in that's when you....

M: That's when my Mother come.

C: No, she was already up here. My Mother stayed with me and she come up here.

A: Oh, you was...

M: I was staying up here .

A: Okay

C: My mother was stayed with me down there.

A: Okay.

C: We stayed together at home till then.

A: Uh, huh.

C: She didn't have anybody to stay with her, down there.

A: So then you-what year was it that you come here?

M: I come up here in '40.

A: Yeah.

M: October of '40.

A: Okay. So as far as-as what we might call the glory years of Avondale you timed it about right.

M: Yeah, that's right.

A: The war years ya'lls stayed busy and.....

M: Well, we always was busy just about while I was down there. We didn't hardly have any short time

A: Yeah.

C: And there at the end of the war for a while, then they you know the pay wasn't all that but they gave us a bonus once a month back then.

A: Oh, I...

M: Yeah, once a month we got a bonus there for a long time

A: I've been reading through *Avondale Sun* and in 1946 was just unreal.

M: Yeah.

A: Forty percent bonuses.

M: One time fifty percent bonus.

A: Now, y'all got a bonus, what once a month?

M: Yeah, we had- we supposed to get it once a year, but then we got it once a month.

A: Because it was going so well.

M: Mm, hmm

C: Yeah. Later on, it was once a year.

A: Yeah.

C: And I think it may be completely out now the way they talk.

A: Well, well my-my mother-in-law....

M: Well they hadn't.

A: Yeah. My mother-in-law clips out anything she sees on Avondale for me, sounds like they're in pretty rough shape right now.

M and C: Yeah.

C : According to the *Avondale Sun* they under the last now and it don't give it as bad as they say it is.

A: Yeah.

M:Them that writes about it does. They say it's bad.

C: Yeah, it says bad.

A: Well, now when you first came with Avondale what-what did you start working on?

M: Uh, in the cloth room, a cloth grader.

A: Uh, huh.

M: And that's what I'd always done all the time a worked down there.

A: Yeah.

M: I-I did do other things in there, but that's mostly what I done.

A: That's-that's one of the jobs where you got to be pretty careful on

M: Yeah.

A: ...what you do isn't it?

M: Yeah.

A: I mean not just with the cloth, but you might get someone hacked off right back in the weave shop.

C: Well, it's pretty hard on their eyes too, you see.

M: Yeah and when we first come here we stood grating, but finally we sat down, but we stood we had to stand still all the-now that was rough.

A: Yeah. But now, you're the first person I talked to who was a cloth grader, exactly what would you look for and how do you do it?

M: Well, just look for the defects you know and if they're bad try to fix 'em up if it wasn't bad, if it was you had to cut it.

A: Uh, huh.

M: We could leave so many defects in but not where we cut in a piece of cloth you know.

A: Yeah. And then when you cut one out what would you do with that piece of cloth, would it become a second or....?

M: I would unless it was forty yards and if it was forty yards you'd have to cull it.

A: Uh, huh and uh, now, who was over the cloth room by then?

M: Uh, Clyde Winfrey was over when I first come up here.

A: Uh, huh.

M: But he didn't stay there long before Mr. Gillum from Sylacauga come in.

A: Yeah. Yeah, I've talked with Clyde. We-we've had several good conversations.

M: Yeah.

A: He really seemed to be very much part of Avondale even after he left.

C: He did. He's been a he lived around here I guess for several years.

A: Yeah.

C: I haven't heard bouts of him when he moved away from here. He...

A: He -he got a....

C: He might have moved off and back.

M: No, I don't ever think he moved off. Who all you talk to in the village?

A: Oh, you're probably the last ones in the village itself that I've talked with. I uh, let's see, back when Alda Donahue was still in the village. I talked with her and uh Syble Chandler, Dreg back when he was still living in the village, uh Willie Bell, Ise Mae Langston. I made contact with uh Gene Neighbors to talk with him. I interviewed...

M: What about Wallace Armstrong?

A: I've interviewed Wallace and Homer Butts uh....

C: Wallace, I guess, well Wallace, he at-at the time the-the mill closed he had more years than anybody down there.

A: Yeah. But as far as years living here, of course, Willie Bell...

C: Yeah.

A: ...her whole life she...

C: Yeah.

M: Yeah. Well Cliff, I expect Willie Belle had more years than Wallace did cause he worked somewhere else till he got married and started living here.

C: I don't know Wallace said he had more. Willie Belle wasn't down there then.

M: No, uh, uh.

A: Yeah.

C: No. Willie Belle overall probably had more than Wallace but she wasn't there before it closed. She got married and had to quit before she got of age I think.

A: Yeah, yeah

C: Before she died of age and then and uh Wallace said supposed said he said he had more years than anybody down there when they...

A: Well, I talked with some folks like uh Flora Brooks Thompson, and Owen Brooks, you know people who worked back in the thirties and grew up here....

M: Yeah

A: ...but didn't stay the entire time.

M: Did you ever talk with Ethel Eason. She lives out between here and Clay in what they used to call Horn Side.

A: Ooh, I'm going to be making a trip out that way uh-uh in fact I just talked to uh Ethel Lavey, Evelyn Lavey.

M: Evelyn.

C: Yeah, she worked down there for a long time.

A: Did she?

C: Yeah, she worked there.



A: Okay.

C: She worked down there until she retired, didn't she?

M: Yeah.

A: Now, Ethel was whose wife.

C: Alvin.

M: Alvin.

A: Oh.

M: She was Alvin's, she was his wife. They both left. Alvin was here a long time, now Ethel she quit a good while ago but she come here a long time ago

A: Yeah

M: to work.

C: Well, did you ever talked to Oma Fowler?

A: Let's see, wait a minute.

C: Let me see. Her home way down there on that lower block of Broad but she stays across out here most of the time now.

A: Uh, uh, I haven't

M: Now, she did that all the time. She lives across from Wallace Armstrong.

C: She can tell you a lot, I imagine.

A: Now, what-what had you said?

M: She lives across from where Wallace Armstrong lives, not-not straight across is it?

C: No, you know where Wallace lives?

A: Yeah.

C: He lives across over there the front of the house that's screened in just like the other one.

A: Yeah

C: ...she staying down there now.

A: And then I talked to uh Tut Carey and I can't think of everyone that I've touched base with.

C: I'll tell you one of the oldest ones that you find that worked in there even though his whole life he didn't work there too much. Doug Durbin. Did you ever talk to him?

A: Yeah, yeah. Someone had mentioned him. I-I tried to find him-is he still working somewhere?

C: No, no. He don't work any now. He's, he rides around during always all over during the day while he's in the home but during the day he'll ride off. Lives by himself.

A: Yeah.

C: I expect Doug's been here every bit of seventy years.

A: Yeah

C: Because he's well in his seventies and the kids come here.

A: Oh, yeah. I'm well aware of Mrs. Molly and that-that group of people. See I've been through the *Sun* from 1923, when it started, to '55, which is when I'm going to be stopping with what I'm doing.

M: Yeah.

C: Well I think Doug and them come up here pretty early. Mother was a widow and had a bunch of kids.

A: Yeah.

C: When she come to work in the mill.

M: Did you ever talk to that what is the woman that writes the *Avondale Sun*? Did you ever talk to her? Thrash, Velma Thrash.

A: Oh, I-I'm going to. She's down in Sylacauga, right?

M: I bet she could tell you a lot.

A: Oh, I bet she is full of information.

M: Yeah.

C: I bet so.

M: And her husband, I think he could tell you too.

A: But Sylacauga is what I'm going to be taking on next and that one is a big one. I mean, I felt like Birmingham there was a lot to do here, but Sylacauga had what, four mills? I guess.

M: There had to be a lot more there.

A: Yeah, yeah.

M: Is Gwen-didn't you say she was your aunt?

A: Yeah right, yeah. I think she worked in the mill just a little while or course.

C: She didn't work long. I-I guess they come here during the war, but...

A: Yeah

C: .....during the war something like that, but she-she didn't work long. She got sick and she never did go back to work.

A: Yeah. Wendy worked until the mill closed, I think.

M: Well, did he work in another mill before he come here?

A: Uh, uh. This was the only place he'd ever worked, only type of mill work.

C: Do you ever see them any?

A: Yeah, yeah. I see them every time I'm home.

C: He don't uh come down hardly I guess he got old enough he don't want to drive.

A: Well, I think, although he looks, great, I guess.

C: Well, he looks like a thirty year old boy.

A: The only differences though, he starting to get some grey hair

C: Well, the last time I saw him he didn't have a grey hair

A: Just a little, you go to look

C: You know he always had pretty, lively hair.

A: Yeah, yeah

C: Matter of fact, he just hadn't hardly changed any since I got to see him about thirty six years old.

A: Well, he-he's changed very little since I can remember. We used to come down here when I was a kid and uh....

C: A niece of his down here they spent a week down here week before last

A: Yeah

C: ...and uh-uh around up in there.

A: See Mona's my first cousin and so whenever I'm over here in the village, I kinda headquarter at her house.

C: The last time that I think one of the girls spent a week I think week before last, around up in there you know. I guess her mother's still living ain't she?

A: Yeah. My Aunt Pearl had to have cataract surgery. That's why they were.

C: Now her sister who was widowed or divorced and all a long time, she got married again didn't she?

A: Yeah, yeah. Yeah she got married again about three years ago. Now, when you came back from the war where did you get a job?

C: I-I worked across the street over there to start with at the tin shop, sheet metal.

A: Yeah

C: And then it turned into uh just uh a steel fabricating

A: Yeah

C: And I always worked over there.

M: Called it Birmingham Tin Shop.

A: Yeah, yeah.

C: They still go by that name, Birmingham Tin.

A: Now have y'all been here the entire time?

C: Yeah

A: ...at this place?

M: Yeah. Thirty-nine years, I've been here.

A: Wow. So I guess...

M: Right here.

A: So I guess when they sold the houses you-you latched on to this one, didn't you?

M: Yeah.

C: Well you take back then, everybody in the village wanted up here on Fifth Avenue and now they'd rather be anywhere but.

M: They widened the road one time. They put the road right here.

A: I was wondering why these houses were so close to the side.

C: Back then there wasn't so much traffic back then. People parked on yards most all of em down Fifth on both sides of it.

A: Yeah, I imagined back then First Avenue was the busy street, wasn't it?

M: That was the main one then after they built the viaduct they wouldn't let trucks go over the bridge you know they come.

C: We did have a sight of trucks but not so many now.

A: Of course between that, between the air traffic and the cars

C: It is noisy.

M: I said, ever since I've lived in this house for nearly nothing ever since I been here up till we bought then I just paid two and a half dollars...

A: Paid rent?

M: .....month rent and we didn't have a water bill, we didn't have much light bill, the mill paid most things.

A: Yeah. What about-who owns most of these houses on this road?

M: Just different ones.

A: Yeah

C: The biggest owner in the village uh-uh, what name is that lady's name?

M: I don't know, I hardly....

C: Carol.

M: Carol.

C: Carol, she owns about twenty of 'em. She mostly rents 'em out

A: Yeah

C: ...and furnishes people I mean for

A: Yeah

.

C: ....a week to two months

A: Yeah

M: It used to be a good place to live here you know everybody started selling...

A: Yeah

M: ...their houses

A: Yeah

M: ...and people bought em.

C: When they moved that road up to the house if everybody on this road got together and said

A: Yeah, yeah.

M: They don't want to move. And nobody left on this road who loved in the houses.

A: Yeah. Well, I noticed this place next door to you is a business now.

C: No, it's....

A: No? Is that just a sign?

C: It was, yeah, a fellow bought it and had merchandise in the house to sell. That was a real good house. A woman, who originally owned it, she fixed it up real nice she god old

A: Yeah.

C: ....she sold it and it changed hands.

A: Yeah.

C: ....but uh the fellow who owns it now you know he owns several of them and he gets the sorriest people he can find and the poorest. An old nigger right now uh he hunts welfare people to rent and you know how niggers are uh usually get one you got fifteen.

A: Yeah, yeah.

C: You rent to one with maybe two in the family and then they'll be fifteen and he don't care as long as he gets his rent.

A: Yeah

C: An old couple right now pretty old. I don't know how many grandkids they have in the school bus

A: Now ba....

C: Just as full as they can be.

A: Now back to the one you were still working, did you-did you go down to Camp Helen during the summer?

M: Never went there.

A: Never went there? You're one of the few.

M: Well, I just never did want to go.

C: You know a lot of these families just lived for their summer vacation down there honest to goodness.

A: Yeah.

M: Well, my people, you know my sister and a bunch of my people and I and uh friends lived down, near Dothan and Elba.

A: Yeah.

M: So, I went down there in the summer instead.

A: Yeah, yeah.

M: I spent the summer out in the country down there.

A: Right.

C: You know, back then if you had a family way back there you could

M: Spent my vacation days down there.

A: Yeah

C: If you had a family way back there you could take them down there cheaper than you could stay home.

A: Yeah, yeah

C: Absolutely, you get by cheaper down there find a place and all cause transportation was free.

A: Now what, they'd just close the mill down wouldn't they, for a week?

M: Yeah.

A: Way back then, of course, once people got cars and all they could space out the vacation times

C: Well...

M: Yeah, but they would close one mill at a time down you know for vacation.

A: Yeah

C: Well, there are so many now, I think that some of the small ones two at the time has to go.

M: Yeah, two at a time mill close.

C: Summer with

A: Yeah.

C: ...school out until school begin not enough time for all of 'em have a week and I think some of the small ones have to go together.

A: But were-were you very involved in community activities? Were you in the Good Neighbors Club or any of that sort of thing?

M: No I was not

A: Were-were you a churchgoer? Did you....?

M: Yeah, I went to church

A: Which-which church?

M: Well, a long time I went to the Baptist and uh just cause I know the people.

A: Yeah, yeah

M: I come up here and went to Baptist but then I changed over to Methodist which I was a Methodist before I come up here.

A: Uh, huh. And how many years ago since they closed? You were talking about Fortieth Street?

M: Yeah.

A: Yeah. How long has it been?

M: I don't know.

C: They closed way before the mill did didn't they?

M: Yeah

A: Did they?

C and M: Yeah

C: Fortieth Street did. I spect it's been eleven or twelve years

M: Berney's been dead for ten years and it's sure been twelve years because we went to Mulga you know all along.



C: Yeah, at least twelve years

M: At least twelve years since they had closed

C: It doesn't seem like it's been that long

M: No, it hasn't

A: I've been trying to find the records of-of the churches. Now Packer wouldn't be much of a problem, but finding records on Fortieth Street would.

C: I spect it would.

M: Wasn't Packer when it closed I believe it was when they moved , when that piece come out in the paper about it?

C: Mm, hmm.

M: And I sent it to my niece she was-she.....

C: I imagine Bentley would know almost from the start of that. He going almost from the start said he starting going when he was four years old. I don't know how old he was anyhow.

M: But now I'm like you about the Methodist don't know. I don't-I don't know as many old ones around here, went to the Methodist do you?

C: I don't know any old ones that went no more. I sure don't. Uh, my brother's wife step daddy, he was an official at the church up there for fifty years

A: Who was that?

C: It was old man Humphry is my brother's wife step daddy he was up there for years.

A: Oh

C: He lived to be a hundred. Yeah, he lived to be a hundred year old, didn't he?

M: Uh, huh

C: He's been dead for good many years. I thought I heard him say one time he'd been in that church better than fifty years.

A: Yeah.

M: I heard something another about the mill back when they had the commissary and had- in Sylacauga they had dairy, you know, I don't' hardly

A: Yeah

M: ...chicken farm and all, do you know...

A: Yeah. Sylacauga seem to have it all

M: Mm, hmm

C: Yeah, they-they did

A: The Drummond Frazer Hospital

M: Yeah

C: Well a long time ago there weren't no insurance you could go to the hospital in Sylacauga and it didn't cost nothing.

A: Yeah

M: They had a cemetery here over near Forest Hill

A: You know- you see that-that's one of the things that got me started on this way back in '76. Uh, you may remember when-when Tut

M: Yeah, I do remember that.

A: ...was talking to news folks about it.

M: But I didn't know it was you she was talking to you about it.

A: She wasn't talking to me about that. Then later on, I got interested in it and that's how I started this- all this interview because it hit me at that time if-if we don't starting talking to folks, we're gonna to lose it all.

M: Yeah, I think Tut had a baby buried over there in that cemetery

A: Yeah, twins. Uh, twins had died. Yeah

M: Mr. McGraw had one died over there, Mrs. Tessie McGraw

C: Yeah. Used to when somebody died, your neighbor just went out there and opened the grave himself.

A: Uh, huh.

M: Well, somebody told me that here in Birmingham, a long time ago that they even sold, the mill, even sold caskets. Now that was fore I come here, I think.

A: Yeah. Well, I haven't even run across that story

M: Yeah. That's one of those. I tell you who told me was Annie Taylor and Ms. Buyers. And of course, Annie is not here anymore and Ms. Buyers is dead. They the ones that told me about the caskets, used to sell caskets out there.

A: Uh, huh

C: Used to what?

M: Sell caskets for the mill block, you know when someone die at the mill.

C: You know they used to sell coal for three dollars a ton.

M: Well, they sold em the coal when I come up her, sold coal.

A: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I got stuff....

C: In other words a big percentage what they paid the help was going back to the company and later on the government.

M: They government stopped it. That's what it was, you know.

C: Had to away with the houses and the commissaries had do away with them. I don't know what happened to the commissaries.

M: Don't know why they quit having em but they did one.

C: As long time ago, ninety-eight or ninety-nine percent of the treasury of the mill had run on credit.

A: Yeah, yeah

C: I'm not sure how much it was but it was credit. And uh you would have thought.

A: Now, around here, I know they were able to get credit like from Sabatinees

M: Yeah

A: Farohs.

M: The La Sousas

A: La Sousas.

C: They used to run a grocery around and it was mostly credit. They sold out of course.

A: Yeah

C: But if you did business around here then and didn't do credit you didn't stay in business long.

A: Well, now, wha-you were talking about the-the credit situation. Were there a lot of people who would-who would come in and work just for a little while and then move on?

M: Mm, hmm, yeah.

C: Well, I-I don't think it was like that.

M: It was in the mill, you know come and go from one mill to another

C: There used to be a 1 bunch that roamed from time to time you know.

A: Yeah

C: And all mills had a boarding house around there. And uh and right after the war it was bad.

A: Yeah

C: Oh, you-you talking about some of them ol' uh- them ol' boys they worked at about every cotton mill in the South.

A: Yeah

C: And some of them used to be up north in Massachusetts; especially....

A: Yeah

C: They worked everywhere.

A: Talk about following mill work

A: Yeah

C: Yeah, some of them just-just left...

A: Boy, some of those would be ones I'd love to find, but I imagine, like you said after World War II they kinda faded out

M: Yeah

C: Yeah, they-they-they faded out just a few years, I don't know why, but they did. Oh, there used to be a boarding house right a little piece down the street.

A: Well, I think that Morris's grandmother ran run for a while. That was before y'all's time.

C: Yeah

M: Eddie Morris was here when I came up here, but he left here right shortly I think in the spring after I came up here in the fall. Nearly every boss in the mill was-left one way or the other....

A: During the war, I think. A lot of them left.

M: Well, that was before the war. That was in the spring after I came up here. They just had a regular turnover. I don't know whether they quit or I guess some of 'em quit and some 'em was fired

C: Actually, back when they didn't pay the mill hardly nothing, the foremen made good money for that time.

A: Yeah

C: Good money.

A: Yeah

C: Cause I heard them talk about it and it was better than most of the mill workers.

A: Where would the foreman live? Did they live over in those bosses' houses?

C: There was four-two-two story houses down there and they called them bosses' houses and there had been five down there and something happened to one of them. And they had two down here. There had been several of them.

A: Where were those other two in the village?

C: Well, uh, if you go down in the square up here uh one of 'em uh-uh facing on one side of the road facing part of the mill and-and-and the other on the end down there not right on the corner beside the alley down there.

M: Moore used to live there if you remember where that was.

A: Yeah. What-what num....?

M: That was one of the bosses.

A: Yeah. What numbers would those have been?

M: I don't know

C: I don't know how they recorded those numbers you know. There just- well, they were only two houses in the whole square there

A: Yeah, yeah

M: See it was a ballpark

C: There wasn't no businesses down there only two little houses.

A: Now this was before y'all's time, but before the ballpark, that's where the old commissary had been.

C: Yeah, right on the corner they tell me there used to be one.

M: And people had cow pens out there and gardens. I was up here you know come up here with my uncle and stayed a long time with them.

A: Yeah

M: ....spent time with them one time and they had cow pins out there

A: Yeah

C: Well, I daresay, I can't imagine why they would let them move the commissary like that. I just don't know.

A: But now, what was your uncle's name? Was it...?

M: Albert Matthews

A: That was your mother's brother?

M: Yeah

A: Yeah. But from-from my reading in the *Sun*, one- couple of years after the war, from then on things were-weren't nearly as good as-as that brief period.

M: No, I tell you from about-from about '42 I'd say, to about, well about '40 maybe '47 was the best time you know of working and all.

C: Well you....see

M: During that time you could work a double anytime you wanted to along then.

C: There was a good many here and there that anything with corn would sale.

A: Yeah, yeah

C: Anything with corn would sale.

M: That's when it went down.

C :It would sell but a lot of it went to the foreign countries and-and uh just fill all orders south.

A: But now during the war, what- for instance, like with you going into the army, most of the able bodied young men were going into the service. Didn't that put a strain on the mill?

M: A strain on the women-the women had to do a lot of men's work, you know during the war.

A: Yeah, and you mentioned the thing about double shifting

M: Yeah and the double shifting....

A: Yeah, yeah

C: They did

A: Made it a-what war materials?

M: Well...

C: All I know they made was just a little pin stripe that nurses wore on their uniforms.

A: Yeah

C: They made a lot of that.

M: I tell you this machinery was old and when they got to making that better material you know

A: Yeah

M: Polyester and all like that—it just didn't work with that

A: Yeah, finally they got new stuff in, didn't they?

M: Well, they did, but it did no good. It still-because it weren't new all the way through you see.

C: Well, it got to where ,too, they just couldn't hire young help down there at all.

A: Yeah

C: Birmingham is so big, you know there's other jobs, it got to where young people wouldn't hire on at Avondale.

A: Yeah

A: Yeah. In other words, a place like Pell City, where that's where the jobs were.

A: Yeah

C: The old ones were all wearing out, you know, and they couldn't get any dependable young help. Looked like they'd been making money and would have to quit.

M: They weren't making money. They were content to sit.

C: They couldn't, they weren't equipped to run the stuff they tried to run- what was selling good on the market.

A: Yeah

C: They just-they just couldn't make it.

A: Yeah, the final materials. Yeah. Well, during that time, being in the cloth room must've really been rough

M: It was trying to make firsts out of them seconds.

A: [LAUGHS] Trying to hope you could go forty feet, huh?

M: Yeah

A: Well, now, from what I can gather and you had mentioned earlier, that working in the cloth room was always rough on your eyes.

M: Yeah it was

A: What type of material was hardest to read? Or what...?

M: I-I guess the stripes were about the hardest, but the stripes weren't ever as bad as the solids. The solids were worst. See, at first they had chambray this cotton chambray and had rayon in cotton then, and that didn't last long then they got polyester in cotton and

A: And I understand dark cloth was rough.

M: Yeah it was. Uh, huh. Yeah, if you got a hold of black cloth you couldn't hardly do it. The white, I guess, was the easiest

A: What-what would they expect you, how much or was there any type of-of production quota for ya'll?

M: Well, it went-it started at two thousand when I come up here and it went to seven thousand before I left there

A: Okay, what-what does that mean, two thousand?

M: Two thousand yards

A: Okay

M: Two thousand yards when I first come up here.

C: Was that on a shift?

M: Uh, huh

A: But unlike, uh, say a weave machine or-or a spinner, you didn't have machinery to aid you did you?

M: Well, we did, you see, we run it- run it over the tables

A: Yeah



M: But at first we had just stood there and turn the cloth.

A: So, I mean-I mean as far as-as looking at the cloth itself...

M: Oh, no

A: ... you had to do just that

M: Uh, uh. We had to do that, absolutely.

A: Yeah

M: And you miss a lot too running it over-running it over them tables.

A: Well, once they had the machines running it over the table, did they just put it on a steady speed or did you control the speed?

M: You controlled the speed.

M: I had it lucky in one way, I was uh- the mill closed down in October, the last part of October and I was sixty-two in December. So I had...

A: That's close. Well, you-you're pretty close to Orville's age, I guess cause...

M: I was seventy-one in December.

A: Yeah, he's a little older. Of course, I man would have to be for Social Security.

C: Let's see uh....

M: Well....

C:...he wouldn't what? Three years older than I am. Seems like he's about three years older than I am.

M: Well, he's not-he's not a year older than I am. He, you know, he quit that year that the mill closed down.

C: That's right, he did. I mean he quit that day—the month he turned sixty-two. He didn't work on out. He quit right then. He didn't work all night.

A: [LAUGHS]

C: He quit then.

A: Well, he...

C: He wouldn't be able to draw.

M: That's what I'm saying.

A: Well, could've worked on out and gotten SSI couldn't he?

M: Well, I think he got that because he hadn't quit in time that he couldn't get it.

A: Yeah

C: You see if you uh-if you was uh that age by a certain time, you got it. Yeah, he got it I hope.

M: Yeah he got....

C: We gonna make more sorry people than the PWA. Now what do you think about welfare now?

A: Yeah, well it looks like uh- I was talking to somebody else who had to quit about the same age when the mill closed. And he said the year after the mill closed he made more money than he ever had.

M: Yeah, I did too

C: Lots of people said that they save more money that year than I ever saved in my life.

A: Oh, yeah. Because you had your Social Security,...

M: Yeah and then...

A: ....your Avondale, and your SSI.

M: Yeah

C: Yeah.

M: And then-and then I got two vacation checks-good vacation checks after I quit and two bonuses after I quit. Two different years.

A: Yeah, because that was in December of '71, wasn't it?

M: Mm, hmm

C: Is he still alive.?

A: Oh, yeah, yeah. He-he can still weave some of the best yarn you ever heard of.

C: Oh, yeah, he can do that.

A: Cut the...

[TAPE CUTS OFF]

[END OF INTERVIEW]